

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

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MASS. DELEGATION URGES GOVERNOR TO EXPEDITE ALERT SYSTEM FOR ABDUCTED CHILDREN

Markey calls AMBER Alert System a "child abductor's worst nightmare"

Washington, DC: Rep. Edward Markey (D-Malden) today released a letter signed by every Massachusetts House and Senate member in the U.S. Congress to Governor Jane Swift urging her to expedite the process of implementing the AMBER abducted-child alert network in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Fourteen states have already implemented such systems, including California where two teenagers were swiftly located and freed from their abductor last month after citizens were alerted to by on the lookout for a particular vehicle. Yesterday it was reported that the State of California issued another "AMBER Alert" for Jessica Cortez, a four-year old child missing since Sunday.

"The AMBER plan is already responsible for saving more than 16 children who were abducted by strangers in the states that have implemented this critical alert system," noted Markey. "We should be the next state to announce that we have the AMBER plan in place. Massachusetts's families want and deserve this protection. The Federal Communications Commission has done its part by adding the new 'Abducted Child Emergency Code' to the country's Emergency Alert System. We are urging the Governor to pull together the law enforcement and broadcasting communities to activate this alert in child-abduction cases in the same way that they activate the alerts for hurricanes and tornadoes."

Rep. Markey, the dean of the Massachusetts congressional delegation and ranking Democrat on the House subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet, and first wrote to the FCC in June 2001, along with 38 other Members of Congress, regarding the need to establish an AMBER Plan emergency alert code. The FCC acted favorably in March 2002. Although the Emergency Alert System (EAS) has always been voluntary, the FCC has ordered that all EAS equipment installed after February 1, 2004, be capable of reading the Child Abduction Emergency Code.

The AMBER Plan - "America's Missing Broadcast Emergency Response" - was first established 6 years ago in memory of Amber Hagerman who was abducted and murdered in Arlington, Texas. According to a study by the U.S. Department of Justice, about 75 percent of the children who are kidnapped and later found murdered were killed within the first three hours of the abduction. The AMBER Plan uses the capabilities of the EAS to issue an immediate, widespread "call to action" to the community to assist in the search for the child and the suspect.

"This is a horrifying and shocking occurrence whenever and wherever it happens," Markey said. "But once Massachusetts implements this plan, it can mean not only good news for an affected family, but also a child abductor's worst nightmare."

A copy of the delegation letter can be found at www.house.gov/Markey.

Additional information about the AMBER Plan can be found at <http://www.missingkids.org>.